

Remarks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa September 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. What a spectacular day. Thank you all for being here. It's great to be in the land of kind people and tall corn. Laura and I are proud to be here. We started early this morning in Pennsylvania, then went to Wisconsin. We're ending our day in this beautiful and important State. You might remember it's the State that started me on the way to the nomination 4 years ago.

We have a—we've got a real soft spot in our heart for Iowa. It's going to be even softer—with your help, we're going to carry Iowa this November. I'm here to ask for the vote. I believe you got to get out and tell the people what you believe and ask for their help, and I'm here to ask for it.

And I'm thrilled to be traveling with Laura. Today I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in there, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm real proud of my runningmate. Dick Cheney is a—he's a fine guy. You know, it's pretty clear he wasn't the prettiest face on the ticket. *[Laughter]* It's not why I picked him. I picked him because of his experience, his steady judgment, and because he can get the job done.

I'm proud to be standing up here with Chuck Grassley. He's a great United States Senator. Every time I talk to him he says, "Remember Iowa." You're lucky to have him in the Senate, and I hope you keep him there. I'm proud also to be here with your Congressman, Jim Leach. He's a fine, honorable, decent citizen of the State of Iowa, and I'm proud to call him friend.

I appreciate all the statehouse people who are here, the local officials who are here. I want to thank Majority Leader Chuck Gipp for being here.

I want to thank my friend Dave Roederer, who is the statewide chairman for this campaign here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Those are the people who are going to put up the signs, make the phone calls, and register your friends and neighbors to vote.

We have a duty to vote in this country, and as you get out to register friends, make sure you don't overlook discerning Democrats. You might remember Zell Miller. There's a lot of folks like Zell who understand, with 4 more years this country will be safer, stronger, and better for every American.

We are approaching an historic national election, and the time for choosing is almost here. This election will come down to the records we have built, the convictions that we hold, and the visions that guide us. I look forward to campaigning in Iowa a lot. I look forward to coming—I'll tell you where I stand. I'll tell you what I believe, and I'll tell you where I'll lead this country for the next 4 years.

I believe that every child can learn, and I know that every school must teach. Because we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations, because we've raised the bar, because we believe we ought to measure so we can solve problems early, before it's too late, we're closing an achievement gap in America, and nothing will hold us back.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor America's seniors with good health care. And I appreciate working with Chairman Chuck Grassley on strengthening Medicare. It made no sense to have a Medicare system where the Government would pay thousands of dollars for heart surgery but not one dime for the medicine to prevent the heart surgery from happening in the first place. Beginning in 2006,

seniors will have prescription drug coverage. Rural hospitals in Iowa will now be taken care of. We're not turning back.

I believe strongly in the innovative spirit of America's workers, small-business owners, farmers, and ranchers. And so we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation. We have been through a lot together in this economy. We've been through a recession, corporate scandals, and an attack on our country which cost us dearly. But because we acted, this economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

This morning, we received the jobs report for August. It shows that our economy has added 144,000 new jobs, plus revisions upwards of about 60,000 for the previous 2 months. We've added 22,000 manufacturing jobs last month. We've added over 1.7 million jobs since August of '03. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in your State is 4.4 percent. This economy is strong. The farm economy is strong, and we intend to keep it that way.

I believe a President must confront problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

I'm running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running on a compassionate conservative philosophy that Government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we're going to win in November.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. The world in which we are living is changing. Just think about what's happened after a generation. Most

people had one job for their entire career, and most of those people were men. Today, women make up a significant portion of the workplace. They work inside the home and outside the home. And yet, most of our fundamental systems, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, and worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. And so, to make sure that citizens are equipped and prepared and thus truly free to make your own choices, we will transform these systems to make our country a better place.

Any plan has got to begin with making sure that we have a growing economy. This global market is expanding. It's creating new markets and new competitions. To make sure that we have jobs here in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. To make sure jobs are here in America and this economy continues to grow, Congress needs to pass a sound energy plan and get it to my desk, an energy plan that says we'll encourage conservation, that we'll have clean coal technology, that we'll be wise about how we explore for resources here at home, but an energy plan as well that understands the great promise of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. In order to keep jobs here, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep jobs here, we've got to get rid of the needless regulations that harm our small businesses, and we need tort reform so people can keep their doors open. To have jobs here in America, we need a level playing field when it comes to trade. We opened up our markets for foreign goods, and that's good for you. You see, when you have more choices, you're likely to get the product you want at a better price and higher quality. What I'm saying to the world is, "You treat us the way we treat you." You see, we can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime, so long as the rules are fair.

And one reason this economy is strong in Iowa is because we're selling Iowa farm products all around the world.

In order to make sure we've got jobs here in America, we need to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. It would be a big mistake to run up the taxes on the American people. To keep the economy strong, we've got to keep your taxes low.

I tell you, we've got an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has thus far promised \$2 trillion in new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, we've still got a couple of months to go. [Laughter] It's awfully tempting out there to tell people what they want to hear, particularly when it comes to spending your money. So they said, "How are you going to pay for all that money—all that spending?" He said, "That's simple. I'm just going to tax the rich."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes, we've heard that before, haven't we? First of all, you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to support all his programs. Secondly, the rich figure out a way to dodge it, and you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you. We're going to win in November.

A drag on our economy is the Tax Code, which is a complicated mess. It is filled with special interest loopholes. Our people spend 6 billion hours of paperwork and headache every year on the Tax Code. The American people deserve better, and our economy needs a different Tax Code. So in a new term, I will lead a bipartisan effort to reform and simplify the Federal Tax Code.

One way to make sure we've got jobs here is to make sure our worker training programs work. We're going to reform the WIA, the Workforce Investment Act. We'll make more money available to our community colleges to make sure we're able to

match the workers with the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

To make sure people can cope in a changing world, we've got to make sure our kids get a great education. Most new jobs are filled by people with 2 years of college, yet only about one in four of our students gets there. In our high schools, we'll fund early intervention programs to help students at risk. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance at our high schools and expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

In a time of change, we need to do more to make sure quality health care is available and affordable. You see, more than one-half of the uninsured are small-business employees and their families. In a new term, we must allow small firms to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts available for big companies.

I met with Marshall Petersen today. He runs—he and his family run Hawkeye Company. It's a small business here in Cedar Rapids. He said that the insurance costs have been rising rapidly over the next years—over the last years. He's worried about making premiums for his employees. He supports association health plans, the pooling efforts, because he believes his business can reduce costs. He said, "This is going to allow small businesses to have lower risk. It's going to allow me to retain quality employees." We must change our way of thinking about small-business insurance in America.

To help more Americans find affordable coverage, we'll offer tax credits to encourage small businesses, employees to set up health savings accounts. To make sure medicine is available to all, we will expand community and health centers all across the country. Every poor county in America ought to have a community health center. And to make sure health care is available

and affordable, we got to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business and running your costs up.

We have a national problem when it comes to medical liability. I've talked to docs all over the country who are worried about staying in business, who are anxious about being able to practice their science of healing. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-hospital and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

In changing times, in order to bring stability to people's lives, we must encourage an ownership society in America. One of the great statistics of the recent times has been the homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. Think about that. The minority homeownership gap in America is closing. More and more of our fellow citizens are opening up the door to their home saying, "Welcome to my house."

Over the next 4 years, we'll expand homeownership in America. And to make sure that people have confidence in the future, we must allow younger workers to take some of their own tax money and set up personal savings accounts. We'll protect Society Security. Nothing is going to change, as a matter of fact, for older citizens and baby boomers like me, when it comes to Social Security. The fiscal solvency of this system is in question for younger workers. We must think differently. We must allow younger workers to build their own nest egg that they can call their own, that they can pass on to the next generation. Social Security reform needs to be strengthened now.

What I'm telling you is, we have a difference of philosophy in this campaign. My opponent's programs expand Government.

My programs expand freedom and opportunity for every American.

In a changing world, some things don't change, the values we try to live by, the institutions like family and marriage and religious congregations that give our society purpose. Because family and work are sources of stability and dignity, I support welfare reform that strengthens family and requires work. I support a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. Religious charities provide a safety net of mercy and compassion. Our Government must support those charities. It must never discriminate against faith-based programs.

Because the union of a man and woman deserves an honored place in our society, I support the protection of marriage against activist judges. And I will continue to appoint Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since that terrible morning, September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our military. We're strengthening our intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We're working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East because freedom will bring the hope and the peace we all long for. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi Arabia was a fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks. Today, because the United States and our friends

and allies acted with firm resolve, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorists; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been detained or killed. Because we have led, America and the world are safer.

The progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. And the toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing, even using weapons of mass destruction. And we know that September the 11th requires our country to think differently. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat.

I went to the United States Congress. Members of both political parties looked at the intelligence I looked at, remembered the history of Saddam Hussein, and came to the same conclusion: He was a threat. And they authorized the use of force—one of whom was my opponent. He looked at the very same intelligence I looked at. He came to the same conclusion I came to, and when it came time to authorize the use of force, he voted yes.

The last option of a President is commit troops into combat. That's why I went to the United Nations. I was hoping that diplomacy would deal with this threat. The United Nations looked at the same intelligence I did. They had a lengthy debate, and they came to a conclusion with a 15-to-nothing vote that Saddam Hussein must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. The free world spoke again.

As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He was not about to disclose or disarm. As a matter of fact, when inspectors were sent into his country, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make. I had to make a decision, a deci-

sion that only comes to the Oval Office, a decision no President would ask for but must be prepared to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted to defend our country, because we acted in our self-interest, 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq have been liberated. Our world is changing. Freedom is on the march. Think about this. In Afghanistan it wasn't all that long ago that the people of that country were living in darkness under the rule of the Taliban, a barbaric group of people who wouldn't even let young girls go to school, who would whip their mothers in the public square because they weren't toeing the line completely. Today in Afghanistan, a brief period after the Taliban have been removed, over 10 million people have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election. It's an amazing statistic, isn't it? People love freedom around the world. Liberty is powerful.

In Iraq, the country now has a strong Prime Minister, a National Council, and national elections are scheduled in January. We're standing with the people in those countries. We're standing with them because they long for freedom, and we're standing with them because when America gives its word, America must keep its word.

As importantly, we're serving a vital and historic cause. Free societies do not export terror. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentment and violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them, and that helps our Nation become more secure. So our mission in Afghanistan and Iraq is clear. We'll help new leaders to train their armies. We'll help them stand up their own armies so they can defeat the few who are trying to hold back the demands and the desires of the many. We

will help those countries move toward elections and get on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

At bases across our country, I've had the high privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform.

I have made a commitment to our troops and to their loved ones. They will have all the resources they need to complete their missions. That's why I went to the United States Congress and proposed \$87 billion of funding for body armor and fuel and spare parts and ammunition, that which was necessary to help our troops in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We received great support for that initiative. The support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As a matter of fact, only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops. Two of those Senators were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When asked to explain why, you might remember he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." He then was asked—he said he's proud of his vote, and he just finally said, when pressed, it was a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We put together an alliance to help us. There's nearly 40 nations in Afghanistan and some 30 nations in Iraq. I appreciate the contributions these countries are making. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue

to work with our friends and allies in the cause of freedom and peace. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom. I'll tell you why I believe so strongly that societies can change: I've seen it firsthand. I've spent time at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi. He's a friend. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. Yet it wasn't all that long ago, when you think about it, that our dads and grandfathers were at war with the Japanese in World War II. And yet here we are, sitting at a table, talking about the peace. Here we are, talking about how to deal with Kim Chong-il in North Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other troubled spots around the world. I doubt my conversations would be happening if Harry Truman and Americans right after World War II did not believe in the power of liberty to transform a society from one with which we were at war to one that we're now friends with.

Liberty can transform societies. One day, an American President will be sitting down with the duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about how to keep the peace, talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place. I've heard the skeptics and the doubters, but I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their liberty. I believe that given the chance, they will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

This young century will be the century of liberty. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we will build a safer world and a more hopeful America. We will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. We will pass the enduring values of our country to a new

generation. We will continue to lead the world to promote freedom and peace.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that needs firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that makes us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. Workers in hardhats were screaming at me, "Whatever it takes." I was doing my best to comfort those who had been in the rubble, and a guy grabbed me by the arm and he said, "Don't let me down." As I wake up every morning, I think about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, I traveled your great State asking for the vote, and I made a pledge that if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:28 p.m. at Noelridge Park. In his remarks, he referred to Iowa State Representative Chuck Gipp; Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who gave the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in a Discussion in Broadview Heights, Ohio *September 4, 2004*

The President. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. I appreciate you coming today. Thank you. Okay, be seated. We got some work to do here. Thanks for coming. I've got an interesting way to describe to you how we're going to make America a safer world and a more hopeful world. And today I'm going to do so by talking to some of your citizens about some interesting ideas as to how to improve life throughout America, throughout Ohio, and throughout the Cleveland area. Then I'd like to take some of your questions, if we've got time. Then I've got to get back on the bus. [*Laughter*]

See, I'm out—I believe you have to go ask people for the vote, and that's what we're doing in Ohio again, asking people for the vote.

Before I begin, before I talk about issues that are on your mind, I do want to talk about something that's on my mind and, I know, on your mind as well. Today on our TV screens, last night on our TV screens, we saw the horror of terror in Russia. And I can just imagine the heartfelt anguish of the moms and dads of those Russian kids. Our prayers are with those families, and yesterday is a grim reminder of the nature of the terrorists we face. That is why this country must be strong and diligent, never yielding. We must bring them to justice before they harm us.

So when I asked Laura to marry me, she said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you'll never have to." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to my word. What a fabulous speech she gave, and she's a—